

MARGELLA.

We get altogether too much sociological discussion these days. The newspapers and reviews administer it to us in large doses. The preacher, eager to keep along near the head of the line, hurls it at us from the pulpit, and the novelist, taking advantage of the trend of contemporary thought, to stir the interest of a rather large class, makes his readers labor through innumerable pages of more or less trite sermonizing in order to keep pace with John and Mary and their decidedly complex love affairs.

Time was when, in a book, a man fell in love with a woman and married her, or was sent on his way, without reference to an eight hour labor law or the question of the distribution of land. That was in the simple, good old days before the world was turned upside down by the socialists. But now, if we accept the pictures presented to us by socialists of the Mrs. Humphrey Ward type as the mirrorings of approximate fact, a woman is no longer content with the simple though fervent, "I love you," of the suitor for her hand. She must needs know what he thinks about land and taxes and money and profit sharing and strikes and arbitration and a hundred other things. Imagine a lover telling his passion in one breath and explaining his conviction on the silver question in the next. The thing is incongruous, and somehow this intermingling of socialism with fiction is not to the taste of those of us who admire the simple stories produced by the masters a generation or two ago, before sociophobia had become epidemic.

We would prefer to take our novels and love stories without the admixture of this leaven. When we are once interested in the fortunes of Mary and John what care we for such things as the regeneration of mankind? The regeneration of mankind is all right in its place, but it has no business interfering with the course of the love of Mary and John.

Art is required in the construction of a novel along the old lines. It takes an artist to attract and hold one's interest by telling us simply, unaffectedly, of the honest love of a good man for a good woman. The writer who resorts to strategy in order to secure consideration, who shapes his pages according to the passing current of ideas or opinions, may or may not be an artist. Frequently he is not. It is a short cut to popular favor, a cheap way of achieving success, a politic pandering to agitated emotions. These socialistic novels are to the genuine old-fashioned novel what the spread eagle stump speech of the campaign orator is to the serious, logical address of the statesman. And they can have no permanent greatness. The issues they deal with must lose in special interest; and thus they are bound to become stale and unprofitable. They are as ephemeral as the emotion that receives them is varying. Who ever hears of Robert Elsmere now? And what has become of the dozen or more books of the same ilk that in the last ten years so excited the popular mind that the fastest printing presses could not satisfy the demands of the feverish public? Gone, every one of them, to that obscurity in which Coxey's army and a score of other manias have been so effectually engulfed. And this, it seems to us, must be the fate of Marcella.

The hundreds of pages of socialism in this book are interesting enough just now, but five or ten years hence maturer thought than Miss Humphrey Ward's will have advanced newer ideas on these questions, and her book will be as a yesterday's editorial on the event of today.

But Marcella should hardly be classed with the job lot of revolutionary novels that has afflicted the reading public in recent years. It is of a much higher sort than most of its predecessors. The story, sometimes, almost hidden from view by the clouds of socialism is nevertheless, presented with true artist's skill; but, in our opinion, the strongest point in Marcella is the characterization.

Marcella, young, beautiful, spirited, emotional, ambitious, is brought under the influence of certain young and enthusiastic reformers and socialists, some honest, and at least one, otherwise. She wins the love of Aldous Raeburn by her beauty and character, and accepts him as her affianced husband chiefly for the use she can make of him and his advantages in her grand scheme of reformation along socialistic lines. And here, it may be contended, is one weak point in Marcella's character. It hardly appears reasonable, knowing what we do of Marcel-

la, that she would accept Aldous without an answering love in her own breast. But be that as it may, she yields to his entreaties, and then, speedily becoming hysterical under the spell of a scamp, Wharton, a socialist and labor agitator, she casts him adrift and comes perilously near error. In the meantime she has been striving to reduce to practice some of the ideas that have taken possession of her, and she finds many difficulties in the way. The regeneration of mankind, even in her lovely hands, becomes an arduous task. She finds among the oppressed, some who do not want to be regenerated, and she accomplishes little save bringing about a formidable complication of affairs. Starting in with an idea that the only proper way is to level down, she learns by degrees that leveling up is more effective and satisfactory in the end, and seeing dishonor and deceit and can't around her, and recognizing something good in the established order to which Aldous belongs, and learning to put more faith in evolution than in revolution, she escapes the wiles of Wharton and there is born in her a true love for the man she so cruelly dismissed. She finally comes out of her hysteria and wins Aldous a second time, and stopping for a moment at the point where "THE END" stares us in the face we can look a little way into the future and see Marcella, inspired by a perfectly rational enthusiasm this time, accomplishing in a simple way, with Aldous' help, what she vainly tried to do with a pack of Whartons and Cravens at her heels.

The sociological part of the book is interesting as showing the difficulty in rolling the earth over in a minute with a crowbar.

The characters are without a single exception, cleverly drawn. Long after we have read the book we can remember Marcella, with her quick sympathy and grace, and conscientious resolve, Aldous Raeburn, whom we distinguish for his quiet dignity and noble manliness and a power held in reserve; Mr. and Mrs. Boyce, with that early misdeed hanging, like Damocles' sword, over their lives, embittering all, Lord Maxwell for his courtliness and gentility; Frank Leven with the boyish impetuosity and ingenuousness, sometimes found in the British youth—resembling in many respects some of Thackeray's characters; Wharton, for his cleverness, even in villainy; and so on through the book. Each person alike stands out dear and distinct, and we find a certain pleasure in following these persons throughout the period covered by the book.

S.

AT SPIRIT LAKE.

Iowa's favorite lake region has enjoyed this summer a greater popularity than has been its good fortune for several years. Okiboji has firmly established itself in the favor of Omaha and Lincoln people, and there is much enjoyment in these two colonies this summer. Among the Omaha people here here are: Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Baum, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Kennedy Mrs. H. B. Mulford, Mrs. Colepetzer, Miss Susie Colepetzer, Miss Cady, the Misses Baum, Miss Andreeson, Miss Palmer, Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Wheeler Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Wilhelm, Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Patterson, C. Clement Chase, Bert Wheeler, W. Farnam Smith. The Lincoln contingent includes: Mrs. L. C. Burr, Miss Mame Carson, Miss Bertie Burr, Miss Mae Burr, Miss Marie Marshall, Will Johnson, B. G. Dawes, Ray Welch. Miss Kate Norman of St. Joseph, Mo., who has visited in Lincoln as the guest of Miss Mae Burr, is also here. Tuesday there was a most interesting exhibition of swimming in Lake Okiboji in which Miss Bertie Burr of Lincoln carried off distinguished honors. She swam across the lake from Pike's Point to Haunted House, a distance of one and a half miles, the first time such a feat has been performed in the memory of Spirit Lake people. The same day Lew Marshall of Lincoln and Clinton Clark of Des Moines also swam across the lake, between those two points.

Considerable interest was manifested in the engagement of Miss Bertie Burr and Beeman Dawes, the announcement of which was made a few days ago. These two young people have been particularly popular, and they have hosts of friends. It is understood that the engagement of another Lincoln gentleman now here, to a Lincoln young lady who remained at home, will be announced upon the former's return home.

George Palmer of Omaha and Ray Welch of Lincoln have been playing the sportsman. One day they brought in sixty-five fish, pickerel, pike and bass.